

Many of the students tutored by SLD Learning Center have a unique learning style, often related to dyslexia. Research from National Institutes of Health (NIH) indicates that one in five students has a learning disability; 80% of students labeled as L.D. have dyslexia. Our students have average or above average intelligence, yet their unique learning styles prevent learning to read by way of traditional classroom methods.

Tutors transport themselves to the agreed upon site, whether school, SLD Learning Center or library. Students and their parents must make arrangements to transport the student to and from the appropriate location. Both SLD Learning Center locations are on city bus routes that provide a viable option for transportation.

2. Staff

Every tutor in our program holds a bachelors degree, has past or present teaching experience, has completed a minimum of 32 hours of Orton-Gillingham based training with the SLD Learning Center, passed the testing, evaluation, and presentation portion of the class, and has fulfilled a minimum 20 hour internship under a master tutor before receiving their first student. Continuing instruction is provided to our tutors as they gain experience. We provide an 8-hour training in comprehension strategies and an 8-hour advanced Orton-Gillingham based training, which are required before tutors are assigned more advanced students.

Ongoing professional development is offered through monthly in-services. These in-services provide updated information regarding the most current research on learning disabilities and dyslexia, training opportunities to learn special methods such as SIM writing, testing data, services available for students and parents, and presentations from professionals such as psychologists or occupational therapists. We also stay abreast of local and regional conferences that are appropriate to our organization, such as the annual LDA (Learning Disabilities Association) conference and the IDA (International Dyslexia Association) conference. In addition to the ongoing training programs, each tutor is observed a minimum of twice yearly to ensure adherence to the quality standards of the tutoring program.

The Education Director at the Kalamazoo site has a Master's Degree in the Teaching of Reading as well as 30 years of experience in reading education. The Director of Education and Training at the Grand Rapids site has a Bachelors Degree in Education and 15 years of experience. Both Directors continue to participate in local and regional trainings to stay current of research and techniques that can be used by our programs.

3. Program Effectiveness

Students in the SLD Learning Center tutoring programs continue to show improvement each year. All students in the program are tested using the Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT III) as a benchmark of their progress. Students are tested when they enter the program and again after 100 lessons. Our results are shown in the chart below.

Test	Gains after 100 lesson (12 months)
WRAT Reading	2.4 years
WRAT Spelling	1.8 years

The instruction used by the SLD Learning Center is an Orton-Gillingham based approach to language remediation. Recommendations by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), National Institute for Literacy, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development and the U.S. Department of Education indicate that any reading instruction program should include the following five areas: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. Our program encompasses all these areas. We work with students to improve their phonemic and phonological awareness through recognition of syllable patterns, their understanding of words that are both phonetic and non-phonetic, improvement of their vocabulary through the understanding of prefixes and suffixes as well as continued expansion of their vocabulary through reading and memorization, and provide instruction to improve both fluency and comprehension. All concepts are taught through the use of multi-sensory techniques. Our testing experience, as shown in the above table, indicates the success of our program.

4. Evaluation/Monitoring

As indicated in the previous section, all students in the program are tested using the Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT-III) prior to the first session and after 100 lessons to track skill level and progress. If the parent/school would like the Center to do additional testing, we do provide those services and use a variety of tests including, Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing (C-TOPP), Gray Oral Reading Test (GORT), Jordan Written Screening, Phonics Fundamentals Inventory, Test of Word Reading Efficiency (TOWRE) and the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT). If a school has already tested a student we will use a copy of their test to identify the students' current skill level. If school testing is used, the tutor will administer the WRAT Reading and Spelling to establish a baseline.

In addition to testing, all tutors are observed a minimum of twice annually. This procedure is to ensure quality instruction and maintenance of program standards. It also indicates to our Education Director any additional training that should be provided to tutors.

Tutors monitor the progress of each student as they prepare individualized lesson plans that correspond with the student's specific needs and development. After every 50 lessons, tutors write a report on their student's progress, indicating areas of strength and areas on which to focus. We also send a survey to parents after 50 lessons so they can evaluate our program and the progress they see in their student. At the request of the parent and school, these evaluations would be mailed to appropriate school personnel at each 50-lesson interval. Test results would also be mailed to appropriate school